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HOUSTON CHRONICLE ARCHIVES**Paper:** Houston Chronicle**Date:** Thu 10/11/2007**Section:** ThisWeek**Page:** 2**Edition:** 2 STAR**San Jacinto River could get federal cleanup funds**

STAFF

The Environmental Protection Agency has placed the San Jacinto River waste pits on a shortlist of potential Superfund sites.

The waste pits, located near the Interstate 10 bridge over the San Jacinto River, are contaminated with polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins, commonly called dioxins, and polychlorinated dibenzofurans, commonly called furans.

Wildlife in the area, including fish, have become contaminated with the pollutants, which can cause cancer and other health problems in humans.

Despite posted warnings, some residents continue to use contaminated parts of the river as a food source.

"This is a major step toward really getting the river cleaned up," said U.S. Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas. "I've been working with the EPA and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to get to this point when the source of the dioxin was discovered."

The pollution emanates from abandoned paper mill waste pits used in the 1960s and 1970s.

Scientists knew for many years that pollution levels in the San Jacinto River were high, but they didn't know why until recently when they discovered the pits.

In March, Green and Rep. Ted Poe, R-Humble, asked the EPA to designate the waste pits a Superfund site.

The Superfund designation would normally provide federal money to help clean up pollutants if the

responsible parties aren't found or are insolvent. However, because appropriations for Superfund projects have dwindled in recent years, Green may have to make a special request in order to fund a cleanup of the site.

For more information, see the San Jacinto River waste pits entry on the EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/nar1773.htm.

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